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AN

ESSAY

ON THE

S E R V I C E

OF THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND,

CONSIDERED AS A

DAILY SERVICE.

WITH A VIEW OF REVIVING
A MORE GENERAL AND CONSTANT ATTENDANCE
UPON IT.

BY WILLIAM BEST, D.D.

A NEW EDITION.

NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS; FERVENT IN SPIRIT;
SERVING THE LORD. ROM. xii. 11.

L O N D O N :

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BOOKSELLERS TO THE

SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,

Nº 62, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD,

1794.



TO THE WORTHY
M E M B E R S

OF THE VERY VENERABLE

Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

IT having been our misfortune to see the day when, in a neighbouring deluded and distracted country, the sentiments and practices of Atheists are avowed and applauded, and the very Being of a superintending Providence has not only been called in question, but publicly denied, it seems more than ordinarily requisite, that we, who call ourselves Christians, and desire to approve ourselves such in deed and in truth, should embrace every proper opportunity of testifying the steadfastness of our faith, and the sincerity of our profession.

At what an easy expence of time and trouble this may be done, the following pages will fully declare. The Essay which in a somewhat different form presents

sents itself to your patronage, was drawn up more than half a century ago, by a very exemplary parish priest, Dr. *William Best*. Many copies of it have been distributed by the Society, but it has, for some time, been out of print. It was chiefly intended for the use and benefit of his own parishioners; and therefore had many local observations, which had an immediate reference to their situation and circumstances. But it was also found to contain admonitions of general use, and of the highest importance. These have been selected with care, and only altered so far as to render them more suitable to the nature of a general exhortation to the Members of the Church of England at large, than the familiar address of a pastor to his own congregation.

We are all equally included in the advice which is here offered: The highest orders of men and women in our Church, instead of being exempted from the exercise of daily public prayer by their exalted station, are more loudly called upon than others to be constant in their observance of this duty. Many and great are the blessings which demand their thankful
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acknowledgments ; many and great are the temptations, to which their situation in the world exposes them. It was admirable advice, and very comprehensive ; “ In the day of prosperity *be afraid* ; and in the day of adversity *consider*.” A due regard to this admonition would induce persons in *every* condition of life to comply with the requisitions of this pious and useful Essay : He, who, in the time of *prosperity*, is afraid lest he fall, will be instant in prayer to Him, who alone can enable him to stand : And he, who in the hour of his *adversity*, is induced to consider from whom the stroke cometh, will naturally betake himself to that Almighty Being, who by His Providence ordereth all things in heaven and earth ; he will fly for comfort to that merciful and compassionate Father of all, who chasteneth us only for our benefit, that He may bring us to Himself.

The public duties, which our Church particularly enjoins, are such, as no condition of pre-eminence ought to induce us to decline, and such as no situation, however low, and however occupied, is justified in disregarding. The attendance on them, where there is a willing mind,

may be so contrived, as neither to interfere with necessary labour, nor with reasonable amusement.

It would not be difficult to point out to you the example of a *Personage*, who has a greater weight of duties, a greater burthen of cares, a greater variety of earthly concerns upon his mind, than any other individual amongst us; who nevertheless suffers neither business nor any other avocation to prevent his *first* addresses to the Majesty of Heaven, for pardon and peace; for grace and direction; for the welfare of his people; and for his own and others' present and future happiness.—After this, let no excuses be made for the neglect of our daily Service: Surely no plea of business or necessary hindrance could be so reasonably urged, as where every such plea is waved; every other consideration being made to bend to a prevailing sense of religious duty.

It is earnestly hoped, that on a review of the following pages, they will be judged by our Society not less likely, than in their former state, to promote the good purpose, for which this Essay was originally composed.

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The inconsiderable alterations which the work has undergone have only been made with a view to render it more applicable to the present times, and to the critical situation in which we stand.

May the Divine Blessing accompany the use of it; that the Name of God may be hallowed; His Service may be frequented; the Christian Church may be edified; and the blissful employment of Saints and Angels may be begun on earth, to be continued throughout the ages of eternity in heaven.

I am,

My Christian Brethren,

your most obedient servant,

and faithful fellow-labourer,

June 24,
1794.

THE EDITOR.

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AN
ESSAY
ON THE
SERVICE
OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND,
CONSIDERED AS A
DAILY SERVICE.

ADDRESSED TO HER
MEMBERS,

More especially those residing in London and Westminster,
and all other Cities and Market-Towns.

THE duties of private and public Prayer naturally result from our conviction of the Being and Providence of God. With the *last* of these duties only, is my present concern: and no further am I concerned with it, than, as led by the design of this Address, to enquire *how often* it is to be performed. An Address is here made to the professed members of the *established Church*; and therefore it is highly reasonable that *her* sense of this matter should meet with a special regard from them: what that is, appears from her

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appointment of a *daily* Service; which, requiring a daily celebration from her Ministers, must be construed to imply the daily attendance of the People upon it. And that she expects this, is plain, from the reason she assigns for giving previous notice of the time for public worship *by the toll of a bell*. The reason, in the very words of the Rubric, is, *that the People may come to hear God's word, and to pray with the Minister*. And according to the Order for Morning and Evening Prayer, prefixed to the Service, such prayer is to be daily *said* and *used* throughout the year; the former of these words referring to the Minister, and the latter to the People.

Such is the provision made by our church for public devotion; a provision, upon which it may not be amiss to make a general reflection or two, before I proceed farther upon my subject.

First then, Hereby she has shewn a due compliance with those scripture-commands, that require us to be *instant* in prayer, to pray *without ceasing*, and the like. Commands, which every member of the Church (so far as they relate to public worship) may fairly be said to comply with, who is diligent in embracing the several opportunities with which *Authority* has furnished him of joining in it. For as the daily morning and evening sacrifice amongst the Jews, obtained the name of a *continual* sacrifice, though
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offered up but *twice* a day; by parity of reason, and with the same propriety, daily morning and evening prayer, our spiritual sacrifice, deserves the name of a *continual* service. Agreeable to which construction, what is said of Cornelius, that he prayed to God *always*, may reasonably be understood of his praying unto him at *every* return of the stated hour for it.

By this appointment, our Church reaches out to us opportunities of constantly offering our devotions in public to God; without giving up either our civil or our religious liberties; and without subjecting us to the temptations of a *monastic* life. So just a regard has she preserved for every thing good and commendable in the Romish worship: at the same time guarding against the superstitions and idolatries of it. She has provided us with the means of having an *united* conversation where we ought to have it, *daily* in heaven; without denying ourselves a friendly intercourse with our fellow-inhabitants of the earth. And to render it a *joint* and *rational* service, she has expressly required it to be performed in a *known* tongue.

No man therefore presumes to charge the Church of England with neglecting to furnish her members with sufficient *opportunities* of serving God in the congregation. It were greatly to be wished, these opportunities were to any tolerable degree embraced:

But alas! so far is this from being the case, that they are shamefully neglected; and perhaps no where more so, considering the numbers of their inhabitants, than *in great and populous cities and towns*: And that almost as much by one *sex* as by the other; even by that sex which may generally be allowed to have more leisure to give attendance than the other; and yet both of them, I will venture to say, might find more than either of them gives. Indeed this absence from the public worship, upon *week-days*, is become so great, that a stranger to our Church must be ready to conclude one of these two things; either that no such appointment had ever been made by her for the devotions of her people, or that few of them knew any thing of it; since so few, even of the serious and well-disposed part of them, ever attend upon it.—And yet surely there are none amongst us professing themselves of *our communion*, so grossly ignorant as not to know, that the Service of the Church of England is a DAILY Service.

What apology persons of leisure will make for this neglect, I cannot say; they are so *habituated* to it, that very seldom, I am afraid, do they ever think of it as any neglect of *duty*: An attendance many of them have never been used to whilst young, and therefore it is not to be expected they should use themselves to it when grown up to riper years. Whereas had they been accustomed
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to it from their youth, there would have been room to have expected such a daily appearance in the house of God, as might have kept the *Order* of our Church somewhat in countenance at least, though it should not meet with a thorough compliance with it.

This neglect could not be so *general*, were men but duly watchful to lay hold of such opportunities as *fairly offer* themselves; such opportunities, I mean, as are best suited to their worldly convenience, of which all in their turns have a reasonable, if not an equal, share.

Thus, for instance, at a time when necessary business may deprive *Masters* of families of leisure to attend; either the *Mistresses*, or the *Relations*, or other members of the family, might find and make use of it: or, in case *Parents* cannot, without great hindrance to their domestic affairs, come constantly themselves; surely they might supply their own occasional absence by the attendance of their *Children*; some at one time, and some at another.

And were this a settled practice in *parishes*, seldom would there be a celebration of the daily Service, either morning or evening, at which *one at least* in every family would not be present. And as the blessing of God upon the *daily work* of families is reasonably to be expected from the *daily devotions* of them; by means of this work,

and by means of these devotions, every individual member would contribute his *proportion* to the prosperity of the whole.

Again, surely *Masters* and *Mistresses* of *Schools*, of *Charity Schools* especially, might find leisure to attend with the *little ones* committed to their trust; for this end, chiefly, so committed; that they might receive from them a Christian education, and be early trained up under a sense of religion and virtue; which, if any thing, a due attendance upon the daily devotions has a direct tendency to promote.—Surely, persons of *no* worldly employments, or of such as admit of frequent intervals from them;—surely, persons in a manner past their labour, might find leisure for this attendance. Nay, considering the shortness of the time (little more than *half an hour*) usually taken up in the celebration either of the Morning or Evening Service, upon the week-days, one would think there should be but few instances, even amongst the most busy part of mankind, where a hindrance to business will deserve to be admitted as a justifiable reason for a general or a frequent absence.

Those that make a conscience (and, blessed be God, some few there are) of giving attendance, do not find it, I dare say, a hindrance to *their* worldly business; with them, Business goes on more cheerfully, and in all probability more successfully, for it; a success which repays them amply for the expence of their time in the public service of
God:

God: which being so laid out, in acknowledgment of their daily dependence upon Him, cannot but recommend them to his protection and providence.

And as there are opportunities of giving this attendance at *different* hours, and at *different* places; some more suitable than others to different persons, according to the difference of their employments; less, much less, is to be said in excuse for the notorious neglect of them amongst us.

It is, I think, on all hands agreed, that *public* devotions, though they are by no means to supersede, are yet to be preferred to *private*, in case of any *interference* between them; more especially where the former may be had with equal convenience with the latter. And there are, among many others, the following good reasons for it:—As greater advantage, both to communities and to particular men, are to be expected from the former—as the benefit of them is reciprocal to the whole congregation—as God has promised to be more especially present at them, and in a more plentiful manner to bestow his blessing upon them—as greater emulation is promoted, and greater honour done to his name by the example of them, than can be done by the latter.

And here it deserves our notice, that the devout Jews, when deprived of an opportunity of attending upon the public service, took care nevertheless to pay their regard

to it, by constantly making the *stated hour* for it the stated hour for their private prayers: as if, by so doing, they meant to unite the private prayers of the *closet* with the public prayers of the *Temple*.

Indeed, as to persons who seldom or never come to the public service upon the Lord's day, it would be matter of surprize to see them at it on other days. And is it not also matter of surprize, that constant frequenters of it on that day, should hardly ever appear at it on any other day? They will not surely say, they have no leisure in a whole week, in a month, in a year, nay, in their whole lives, for it. Men of as great business as they, find this leisure: and therefore business, though sometimes a necessary, and always then a justifiable excuse, can never yet be pleaded in justification of a *general*, much less of a *total* neglect.—And of such we daily meet with numberless instances in great and populous cities; inso-much that, to our reproach, we suffer *country* parishes to set, instead of receiving from us, examples of a better attendance than we give.—In *market* and other populous towns, such a congregation is usually to be met with, *two days* of the week at least, as bears some proportion to the number of inhabitants: but this, I am afraid, is not the case in great cities, even though a particular service (the *Litany*) be expressly appointed to be used upon them.

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To what end, do we imagine, has our Church enjoined a service for *every* day, throughout the year; or wherefore has she made some of those days solemn *Fasts*, and some of them solemn *Feasts*, but out of a truly primitive zeal, to preserve an habitual sense of religion upon the minds of her people? And yet her people attend it no more upon *holy*, than upon *ordinary* or common days; so that all distinction of days, as to any religious observance of them, is in a manner ceased from amongst us, except it be the Lord's day.—And really to this, so little is the regard paid, especially by persons of the highest and of the lowest rank, that I could hardly prevail with myself to make *it* an exception to my general complaint.

Much less can I hope that any considerations made use of, to enforce an attendance upon the *daily* Service, will avail with men remarkable for an habitual profanation and abuse of the *Christian Sabbath*.

My utmost aim at present is to contribute towards reviving a more general and constant attendance upon it, by *good and serious* persons; by persons maintaining the public profession of their religion upon the Lord's day, but yet constantly withdrawing themselves from it on the week-days.

And to such persons, as having, it may be presumed, from their regard for the *Christian Sabbath*, a regard for the honour of

God, I beg leave to recommend a serious perusal of the following ESSAY upon the DAILY SERVICE, wherein they may expect to meet, besides *occasional* matter,

- I. With several weighty reasons for a constant attendance upon it.
- II. With reasons, nevertheless, in certain cases and circumstances, for dispensing with this attendance. *L. 29*
- III. With an account of advantages and good effects arising from it, where given. *L. 36*
- IV. With an answer to the pleas, pretences, and excuses of men, for not giving it. *L. 43*

I. And in order to induce good and serious Christians to give their attendance, let them reflect with me upon the following *reasons* for it.

1. What a demonstration would it be to the world of a public spirit of devotion subsisting among us! even such a spirit, as might justly intitle this nation to the glorious character which God promises to bestow (*Exod. xix. 6.*) upon his own peculiar people;—that *they should be unto him an holy nation, a kingdom of priests.*

2. That as it is their duty to do every thing to his *glory*; can they do any thing more conducive to it, than by a daily public worship of Him?

3. That

3. That as it is their duty to let *their light shine before men*, can it any where shine more advantageously, than in the daily assemblies of his saints?

4. That as *devotion* is to the soul what *food* is to the body; by means of this attendance, it would in time become as habitual for a *parish* to partake of the daily service for the nurture and nourishment of their souls, as it is for every *family* in it, at stated times, to partake of food for the daily sustenance and refreshment of their bodies.

5. That *disuse* of public prayer (not less than of private) begets disinclination; and disinclination, at last, will end in aversion to it.

6. That a constant attendance keeps up our acquaintance with our *Liturgy*; and (from the *Lessons, Epistles and Gospels* read) with the Rule of our faith and practice; thereby preserving a *constant sense* of religion and virtue upon our minds.

7. That it serves as a daily check to the manifold *temptations* of the world; to which they that converse with it, without ever conversing by prayer with God, will of course fall a sacrifice.

8. That it serves as a *Week's Preparation* of us, for the more solemn discharge of the duties of the Lord's day.

9. That it tends to remove a popular objection of Papists against us; who are very apt to urge, That whilst we *pretend* to be re-

formed from the errors of their church, we suffer ourselves, in point of public worship, to be far more remiss than they. An objection, that can no other way be so effectually answered, as by a more general and constant attendance upon the daily service.

And as the want of a Congregation is the only justifiable, so is it the only true reason, why we do not every where meet with a daily celebration of it in our *parochial* churches; in some of which it would be extremely difficult, if not impracticable, especially in *country-villages*, to comply with her *Order* for it; and therefore to them, we conclude it was not intended to be given.

However, God be thanked, a due regard is still had to it in many places amongst us; at least *so far*, that in them an *opportunity* is still given of a daily attendance upon it—as in several churches in cities and towns—in our *Colleges*—in our *Cathedrals*—in our *Bishops* palaces—and at the *Courts* of our Princes.

And greatly is it to be wished, that the same regard was likewise still had to it, in the houses of our *Nobility*.—Many of them were once *religious* houses; distinguished, as for hospitality, so for piety, and for the celebration of the daily service in them.

And it is the more to be wished, on account of the great increase of the number of *great* mens' servants; who many times have no opportunity for public worship on
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the week-days, if upon the Lord's day; but what they meet with in their *masters'* houses; in which, if *Common Prayer* be not daily performed, (to perform which was the first intent of *domestic Chaplains*) and a due attendance upon it required, great immorality and licentiousness, as well as great unfaithfulness, will in all probability be the consequence, with respect to such servants. *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*—was the pious resolution of Joshua, before all the people: not content with serving him *himself*, he took care that his *several dependents* should serve him too.

Not unlike this was the instance which this nation once knew, in that Pattern of Religion to all Christian Princes—the royal *Martyr*—of whom the noble Historian gives the following character: *That he was very punctual and regular in his devotions—that he was never known to enter upon his recreations or sports, though never so early in the morning, before he had been at public Prayers: so that on hunting-days his Chaplains (and I suppose his Nobles too) were bound to a very early attendance.*

And though instances of a like pious zeal for the daily service of our Church, are not, it is to be feared, at this day, very common amongst us, in persons of the first station and rank; yet, blessed be God, we are not without some eminent examples of great and good, *great because good*, men amongst them,
remarkable

remarkable for their constant attendance on the daily devotions, and for requiring the like attendance upon them from all their *domesticks*.

But to return from this digression, to further reasons for this attendance.

10. And here again, let good and serious Christians ask themselves the question, since the public worship is, and very properly, called—*a Service*—why the service paid to God, is not to be as constant as the service paid to men? especially as that service is, what no services of men can pretend to be, *perfect freedom*?

11. That since they profess themselves *members* of the Church, and by so professing themselves, own their obligation to obey all her just and reasonable commands, one of which is her appointment of a service for every day throughout the year; can they imagine that they answer her expectations herein, by attending no oftener, if so often, upon it, as *one* day in seven; and perhaps but one *part* of that one day in seven? as if the Evening and Morning service were not equally parts of the daily service, as the evening and the morning are equally parts of the same day.

12. That as this order of the *Church* is likewise enforced by the authority of the *State*; can they shew a disregard to the one, without shewing at the same time a disregard to the other? or can they be undutiful
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sons of the one, without being disobedient subjects of the other?

13. That as our blessed Lord, by his attendance upon the daily Jewish service, set his disciples an example of daily public worship; and by virtue of this single petition in the prayer composed by him for their joint use—*Give us THIS DAY our daily bread*—has directed them to a daily use, the use our Church makes of it, in the congregation; can any thing be more becoming them, than a compliance with his directions, or their following his steps?

14. Nay, is not the *subject matter* of the daily service, the very prayers and praises that compose it, a strong argument for a daily attendance upon it; being such, as every man, every day of his life (not reasonably hindered) ought to join in? There are not more, there are not less reasons, for his doing this to-day than there were yesterday, and will be again to-morrow.—Let men but carefully read the daily service over, and they will soon be satisfied of the reasonableness of what I say.—For, to take no notice of other parts of it, give me leave to ask, Is there any thing in the *daily Confession*—in *our Lord's Prayer*—in the *Credo*—in the daily Prayers for *Peace, Protection* and *Grace*—in the Prayers for *the King and Royal Family*—(daily proofs, by the way, of the *loyalty* of the Church of England)—in the Prayer for *Clergy and People*—for all *Estates*
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of men—in the *general Thanksgiving*—in the Prayer of St. *Chrysostom*—or in the *apostolical Blessing*—but what may and ought, with equal propriety and reason, to be used by them upon all, as upon any one day of their lives?

15. Especially as by means of a due attendance upon the daily service, provided it be *sincere*, their souls are kept in an *habitual readiness* to receive their summons, whenever sent to call them out of their bodies, to join with Saints and Angels in the worship of God, in his immediate presence.

And in truth, I know not in what other light we can set the daily service, so likely to recommend it to the daily use of the pious and devout Christian, as by thus representing it to be, what in fact it is, a *daily preparation* of him for that service in heaven, which when once begun, shall never have an end; when those hours which the scripture calls *hours of prayer*—hours which we are too apt to think *long*, shall be lengthened, not into days, or months, or years, but into *endless* ages of devotion.

Then *private* prayer and private praises, (which some men, otherwise very good men, may content themselves with here, to the neglect of the daily service) shall be no more; but all shall be *public*—one universal *chorus*.

And can devotions be too frequent, that are to prepare them for *perpetual* worship? Shall they not, the more they habituate themselves

themselves to the one, be the better fitted for the other? This is the end and this the effect of habit and use in other cases; why not then in the case before us? Shall not those praises be, at least *daily* now, that are to continue hereafter, even till days, and years, and time itself shall cease! When the adoration of glorified creatures, celebrating the glories of their eternal Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, shall be as endless as infinite duration; that is to say, as endless as their own existence?

Who would not spare an hour or two every day of his life, to be spent, to be religiously and devoutly spent by him, in the daily service of the church; when he considers that the religious and devout use of it *qualifies* him to join with Angels and Archangels, even with all the company of heaven, in lauding and magnifying the name of God?—not as now, once a month, once a week, or once a day—but in *evermore* praising him, and saying, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts!*

Blessed God! enlarge the faculties of our souls, to fit them for their share in the joyful harmony of these Hallelujahs in thy heavenly kingdom: to which nothing upon earth bears so near a resemblance, as the solemn services of devout Christians uniting in the public worship. And the greater their number, and the more frequent the returns
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of their worship, the nearer is this resemblance.

But alas! what similitude, what proportion is there, between the *whole Host* of heaven, singing eternal praises to God, and an *handful* of men joining in our daily service! Is there any foundation for a *comparison* between the numbers composing this celestial choir, and between a congregation, consisting, it may be, of no more than two or three persons? Or what returns of our public devotions, less frequent than *twice* a day, can give them any sort of resemblance to an *endless* worship?

16. Again; we profess to believe, the *Communion of Saints*—of the Saints on earth one with another, and with the Saints in heaven. But how ill is this communion kept up on our parts, whilst we so seldom maintain it by public prayers and praises one with one another, and of course so seldom with the Saints above?

17. In a word, is it at all likely we should be qualified for a *continual* worship, whilst we suffer ourselves to be so deficient in a *temporary* one, which is to *prepare* us for it? No; there must be *habits* of public devotion confirmed in our souls; habits that must remain in, and go with them into the other world, or they never will be prepared for a joint-worship, incessantly to be performed there.

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For what the Apostle says of *charity*, is as true of *piety*, that it *never fails*: the exercise of it by pious souls, translated into heaven, is but a *continuation* of it, as exercised by them here upon earth, though exercised there to far greater degrees of perfection.

The same Apostle pronounces men blessed that *die in the Lord*; because, says he, *their works do follow them*: or, as the words may rather be rendered, do *accompany* them; that is to say, because the habits of piety and charity, contracted by their souls whilst in the body, are conveyed together with them into regions of happiness; both *qualifying* them for it, and *constituting* no small part of it. So that, as another scripture saith, *No man without holiness* (habitually established in him) *shall see the Lord*.

And are not all these arguments for the frequency of our public devotions; that the frequency of them may produce *facility* and *perseverance* in them; and the *will* of our heavenly Father may be done by us on earth, with that unanimity, readiness and cheerfulness, with which it is done by his Angels in heaven, uniting in the adoration of him.

18. As the services we pay to God are always the *more acceptable* to him, when they are *voluntary*; an attendance on the daily service must, on that account, in a particular manner recommend us to his favour. For though a provision is made by our Church for a daily public worship, to give
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all its members an opportunity of joining daily in it; yet I know of no *penalty* there is upon persons neglecting it upon the *week-days*: whereas the laws have provided one to be inflicted upon the neglecters of it on the *Lord's day*. Where, then, men join constantly in this service upon the week-days, they may well be presumed to do it, not by *constraint*, but *willingly*; they may well be presumed to do it purely out of a sense of religion: not for ostentation, not through fear of the law; much less, in these times, in compliance with fashion or general custom.

And as no kind of *coercion* is used, either by church or state, to enforce an attendance on the daily worship, it is readily confessed, that after all persuasion and intreaty concerning it, and after all the reasons and motives that have been offered for it, the matter must, in the ultimate resort, be left to the *consciences* of men, to their own reason and discretion, as best judges of the necessity of their avocations from it.

Nevertheless, considering the general neglect of it, by all sorts of men amongst us, it is high time their consciences should be *awakened*; it is high time to put them in mind of a duty, of which they appear to be so insufferably unmindful.

Many duties, I am persuaded, are omitted, not with *settled intention* to omit them, but for want of mens' knowing, that is, for want of
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of their looking upon them as duties, and for want of being duly told of them as such. And perhaps, in nothing are the words of our Church in her daily Confession more true, than with respect to the neglect of her daily service—*We have left undone those things which we ought to have done.*

Were places of *public resort* for *recreations* and *amusements* to be no more frequented, than the house of God is, on the week-days, (not to say, on the Lord's day) the *proprietors* of such places would soon find themselves obliged to shut them up; as too many of our churches remain for no other reason shut, but because, when open for the daily service, none, or so few, will give their attendance upon it.

But this matter, it has been confessed, must finally be left to the consciences of men. Accordingly to mens consciences I refer it: And I am glad to have it so referred; since then it may be hoped, that serious and well-meaning persons (the persons to whom I write) will make a matter of conscience of it.—To them I presume to offer but one caution upon it, as so referred; that is to say, that, as a matter of conscience, they would take a scrupulous care not to be *too indulgent* in excusing themselves from coming. Their common excuse, I am aware, will be, That *business* hinders them.—But too indulgent surely they are to themselves, if they mean, that this should be taken as an
excuse

excuse for a *total* or for a *general* absence. For it is not to be imagined, they are at all times so engaged in necessary business, as to be deprived by it of *all* leisure to come.— They can find leisure for *amusements*; they can find it for *diversions*, even at the known hours of daily prayer; and can be at much greater *pains* and *trouble* to be present at the one, than is required to partake of the other. It must be concluded then, that they might find leisure also for an attendance upon the daily devotions. They can be at *Coffee-houses*, at *Taverns*, at *Assemblies*; they can and do pay and receive *Visits* one from another, *at these very times*. Consequently, worldly business does not *always* prevent them; since, if it did, it would as necessarily prevent them from giving attendance upon their *amusements* and *pleasures*, as upon the *daily prayers*.

But here I expect it will at least be whispered among you—What! are we to be allowed *no* time for amusements? but must all the little leisure we have from necessary worldly business, be laid out upon the service of the Church?

Mistake me not, I am not so rigid; neither am I so refined. There is, I am persuaded, if not to *all*, to *most* men, leisure time enough for *both* these. And I am content that a much greater part of it should be employed in innocent amusements and refreshments, than in the service of God.
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Though this I must add, that the little part of it which men spend, provided it be devoutly spent, in his service, will make their amusements and refreshments a more sincere pleasure unto them, than if the whole of it had been spent in *them*.

It may sometimes happen, that an attendance upon the daily devotions cannot be given, without some *inconvenience* to us: what does our attendance in such case argue, but a sense of our obligation, and a pious resolution in us, that a *small matter* shall not prevent our discharge of it?

II. And yet after all, there may be *sufficient reasons for dispensing, in certain cases and circumstances, with this attendance.*

And therefore I do not mean, by any thing advanced throughout this *Essay*, to insist, that persons, whose daily subsistence depends upon their daily labour, are to neglect it, to make way for an attendance upon the daily devotions. Such men are serving God in serving themselves and families, by a faithful discharge of the duties of a laborious life: with which discharge, a daily attendance upon public Prayer, or Preaching, must be often found incompatible. — The Gospel places a *Religion* in labour, whilst it teaches us to construe services done unto men, as done, through Christ, unto God. Nay, for the comfort and encouragement of the *honest Day-labourer*, it has intitled him, thro' the
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the same channel, to a reward of his labours, infinitely superior to the hire for which he serves.

And as God indispensably requires labour from men, especially from men in *low* stations; he cannot be supposed to expect any *great* portion of their time for public worship, on those days which he has appointed for daily labour.

What time they can *really* spare, they will do well, if they have opportunity, so to employ; and *some* spare time, it may be imagined, many of them may have; at least some part of the day, either before their daily work begins, or after it is over.

It is observable, that whilst Zacharias, the priest, was burning incense in the temple, at the time of Divine Service; the whole multitude of the people are said to have been without, *praying*. Now in this multitude, there must be supposed many, who had worldly employments, professions and trades; many, whose whole livelihood depended upon their daily labour: and yet we there find, they gave their attendance on the daily sacrifice: which answering to our daily service, by parity of reason, it may be argued, that the laborious poor *amongst us*, might also find leisure, consistently with their daily work, for an attendance upon the daily devotions; and where they can find this leisure, there they ought, if an opportunity offers, to make use of it.

But yet, I do not press this as a matter of *indispensible* obligation, upon persons doomed by Providence to earn their daily subsistence by the sweat of their brows. If men in their situation and condition of life, fail not to commend themselves, and the work of their hands, to the blessing of God, by *private* or *family* prayer, morning and evening, at home; and are constant at Divine Service on the Lord's day; the necessary attendance which their worldly business on the week-days requires of them, will plead, in the sight of God, and of all reasonable men, their exemption at such times from the *public* service: where their attendance upon the one would be, as is here supposed, inconsistent with their attendance upon the other.

The same allowance must be made to persons employed day and night, it may be, in laborious *manufactures*;—to persons bred up in *husbandry*, and in *country* business, to them and to their servants; many of which are so far removed from the *common place* of public worship, that, supposing what is not to be granted, their worldly employments would at all times give them convenient leisure to attend; yet their *great distance* from their parish churches must render it highly inconvenient: nay, it would necessarily take up too large a portion of their time in going *to* and *from*, besides attending *at* them.

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Again,

Again, if *servants* and *apprentices*, to whose daily labour their respective *masters* have a right, should, instead of *labouring*, spend their time in attending upon these weekly devotions; their *masters*, I apprehend, would be justified in the sight of God and men, for restraining them, if such time could not be so spent without *great detriment* to their masters' business: and especially, if such masters, according to their duty, make use of *family devotions* for the benefit of these apprentices and servants, as well as of themselves, and their wives and children.

The *Governors of the Church*, as guardians of the established Religion, would have been greatly to blame, had they not reached out to all its members *opportunities* of daily worship. And yet it could never be their intention in so doing, to expect a daily attendance upon it, where it would be extremely inconvenient, if not impracticable, to give it.—In such case we are content, provided it be a *general*, an *habitual*, or even a *frequent* one; that is to say, an attendance oftener given than withheld.

At the same time, I make this very favourable construction of the *Order* of the Church; there are, no doubt, examples of good and pious Christians amongst us, complying with the very *letter* of it, day by day, for a long course of years; where sickness,
or

or some other urgent cause, has not prevented them.

But as instances of this sort, it is to be feared, are not very common, I should rather expect to find them amongst the *other* sex; especially as we have a scripture example of it in *Anna* the prophetess, the daughter of *Phanuel*; of whom it is said, (*Luke* ii. 36.) *that she departed not from the temple, but served God night and day.*

Where observe, first, that a daily attendance upon the service of the temple, is expressly said to be a *serving God*: an observation much in favour of our Church's institution of a daily service. Observe, secondly, the *age* of the person that gave this attendance: *St. Luke* calls it a *great age*; for she was, it seems, *about fourscore and four years old*; and yet notwithstanding the greatness of her age, or the infirmities of it, she served God in the temple night and day. Surely, persons ready to catch at every little pretence to hinder themselves from coming to *daily prayers*, preserving in their minds this remarkable instance of a constant frequenter of them, must be ashamed of their idle and frivolous excuses. Observe, thirdly, that the expression—*serving God night and day*—implies nothing more than a constant attendance, *at stated hours*, upon the morning and evening worship. The same may be understood of parallel places of scripture, importing *continual* prayer: which being de-

livered in the form of a command, make this attendance the duty of Christians.

With regard to persons in *necessitous* circumstances, it must yet be observed, that the less leisure they have for this attendance on the week-days, the more ought they to think themselves obliged to give it on *that* day, which God hath set apart for the public worship of him, by all men indifferently and alike.—That since he has indulged them *six days in seven* for their honest labour, he will most assuredly expect the *seventh*, or *one in seven*, to be dedicated by them to his honour and service. No encroachments upon that day will be allowed of, or connived at by him; it is a day of *holy rest* from all their worldly labours, to be employed by them and all men, as far as they have opportunity and ability, in labours of love, in acts of mercy and charity to their neighbours, as well as in acts of piety and devotion to God.

And yet, who are so apt to make encroachments upon the *Lord's day*, as men refused to an attendance upon the *daily service*; as worldly-minded men, employed in the business of their worldly callings the whole week beside? *That*, they first plead as a reasonable excuse for their non-attendance upon the daily service, and then most unreasonably plead it also as a pretext for their neglecting the service of the Christian Sabbath. They *must* have, they tell you, some recreation,
some

some refreshment. *Business* will not let them have it on the week-days; and therefore they presume God Almighty will excuse them, if they take it upon *his* day; though to the neglect of his worship, and in contempt of his appointment of it.

But now, though it may be thought highly reasonable to exempt the *industrious Poor* from a constant attendance upon the daily service, where such attendance would *interfere* with their daily work: yet as to persons of *more leisure*, and in *more opulent circumstances*, there cannot be the same reason for this indulgence.

The daily service, it may reasonably be understood, was principally intended for the use of persons blessed by God with *sufficient leisure*; many of them, perhaps, with an entire freedom from secular employments; having their *whole* time at their own command, and little or no part of it taken up in the employments of the world: or blessed with such an *affluence of fortune*, as puts them above the necessity of getting their daily bread by their daily labour. *Gratitude* to their great Benefactor, the Providence of God, must prompt them to spend a good part of the leisure he has given them, in his service; in which also they find both their present and future account.

And here I cannot but take occasion to speak of a *pious* and *laudable practice* of some, who, after they have obtained a rea-

sonable fortune, by the blessing of God upon their honest industry in trade, have, in the advance, or towards the close, of life, *retired*; not from the world, but yet from the hurry and business of it; to enjoy more opportunity and leisure for practising *the one thing needful*: for religious exercises; for *examining and proving their own selves*, according to the advice of the Apostle: after they have examined and proved, and settled to their satisfaction, their worldly accounts. In a word, for a more constant and uninterrupted attendance upon the Service of the Church, on the week-days as well as on the Lord's day. An attendance which a multiplicity of business will be exceedingly apt, as they must have found, to prevent.

Indeed, a life thus retired is best fitted, as for other religious duties, so particularly for a daily attendance, where opportunity is given of attending daily, upon the public devotions.—Such an attendance, how much soever to be wished, is hardly to be expected from men of very great worldly business, and of great public employments.

It is admitted, then, that hindrances will unavoidably happen, to men the best disposed to give a daily attendance upon the daily devotions; especially where the *common hour* for them, as must be the case in *parishes*, is fixed and stated, and is and must be one and the same to all the inhabitants.

However,

However, men of *families* and *fortunes* (whose place of abode is usually at some distance from the *parochial* place of worship) may easily obviate this inconvenience, with respect to themselves and families, by providing for their use *domestick Chapels*, (as some of them to their honour have done, and all may do) for the celebration of the daily Service; at a *set* hour, but yet to be *varied* by them as any urgent occasion may require.

Besides these Chapels, blessed be God, there are also *private houses*, in which good and pious persons, true lovers of the Church of England, and of her daily Service, have it regularly and duly performed, by their *own Ministers*, or by the ministration of some other persons in *Holy Orders*, every day of the week, for the use of themselves and servants; when deprived of the opportunity of joining more publicly in it, either through infirmities of age, or by other unavoidable impediments.

And, in truth, this Service (which is one great excellency of it) is admirably contrived, as well for *private* as for *public* use: and the more men accustom themselves to the first of these uses, the better qualified and disposed will they be to make the last use of it. So far is an habitual acquaintance with it in the *family* or in the *closet*, from causing any dislike to, or contempt of it in the *congregation*.

A Service always to be spoken of *with gratitude*, by every member of the Church; as reaching out unto them opportunities of daily edifying and improving by it.—A Service, always to be spoken of to the *honour* of our Church; as a provision for the devotions of her people *peculiar* to her: inasmuch as daily public worship is no where, that I know of, kept up amongst any of the various sects of *Dissenters* from her communion.

In St. *Matthew* xviii. 20. Christ hath expressly declared, that *where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is he in the midst of them*.—Comfortable words, indeed, to the daily frequenters of the daily Service; words that carry with them a strong motive to their perseverance in this pious practice: words that supply the *Ministers* of the Gospel (whose duty it is to attend *continually on this very thing*) with a powerful reason against being quite disheartened from all further celebration of the daily Service, by the non-attendance of so many of their people upon it.—Words that are, both to *pastor* and *flock*, a great argument for the *continuance* of the daily Service, though so small is the number of the frequenters of it. In short, words that carry with them a mighty encouragement to Christians *in general*, to assemble themselves together for daily worship.

And

And yet, all these considerations admitted, still they are words, that at the same time carry with them likewise a severe rebuke of all those that *neglect* it. For the fair and natural inference from them is this; that, if where no more *than two or three* are gathered together for this worship, there, nevertheless, Christ is in the midst of them; how much rather, where the numbers are far more considerable?—Surely, ye do not so understand our blessed Lord, as if two or three of you were to be the representatives of your whole parish!

The *time* when this was spoken by our Saviour deserves to be considered. It was before the Christian Church was *established*; when the number of Christians was comparatively small, even so small, that two or three might be supposed to bear *some* proportion to the whole number. It was long before the Church was taken, as it now is, into the protection of the *civil magistrate*; and whole nations, this among many others, became *Christian*. Now, therefore, the number two or three, in any *populous* place, bears no proportion to the whole number of inhabitants; in which there are often so many *hundreds*, it may be so many *thousands*. And yet, alas! little more than that number, the number of two or three single persons, is all that, in a *Christian*, in a *Protestant* country, composes a Christian Congregation,

tion, upon a week-day, even in towns and cities full of inhabitants! A smaller number than may reasonably be expected to join daily in *private family devotion*. Nay, I make no doubt, but that a greater number of Christians assemble daily for Christian worship, even in countries where Christianity, instead of being the religion of them, is but *connived at*, is at most but *tolerated*; nay, where it may be under *persecution* from, instead of enjoying the protection of, the *state*.

This indifference towards the daily Service leads to other instances of neglect, particularly that of *bringing Children to Church for public Baptism*.—If parents lived at any *distance* from their parish church, or were the daily Service performed but *rarely* at it, there might be some shadow of excuse for you; but surely persons living where the Service is frequently, if not daily, performed, must be utterly inexcusable: and the more blame-worthy, because hereby they set a very bad example to *country parishes*.

Were Christians once to become frequenters of the daily Service, few, I am persuaded, would ask of us so *absurd* a thing, as is the ministration of public *Baptism* in private houses.—It is very observable, that those few who are constant frequenters of it, are most desirous to bring their children to *Church* for Baptism. They that are obedient

dient to one of the Orders of the Church, will not be disobedient to the other.

The most likely way to recover men to a sense of any duty is for the *principal* persons in a parish first to set the example; and *inferiors*, always fond of imitating their *bettors*, will be ready to follow it.—Thus, in time, an attendance upon the daily Service may become as much a *fashion* and *custom* as any other: and surely a more *laudable* one it would be, than most of the common customs and fashions of the age are.—Here both *master* and *servant* may meet together, after they have discharged the duties of their respective relations in their worldly callings.—Here the *industrious trader*, whom necessary business might hinder from attending at any other part of the day, finds leisure to attend at this; and before he meets his neighbours, at the usual place *for an hour's refreshment in the evening*, takes care first to meet his God, and to refresh his soul with the service of the sanctuary.

Here also the *honest day-labourer*, though wearied with the toil and drudgery of his daily work, may be glad to attend: the *good man* remembereth them no more, for joy that an opportunity is reached out to him, of lifting up his hands and his heart to God, at this evening sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; at which the *poor* and *distressed* pour out their complaints, and shew him of their trouble, addressing them-

felves to his compassion and mercy in the Prayer of the Church *for all sorts and conditions of men*. Here, according to the command of St. *James*, the *afflicted* pray daily for a deliverance from their affliction, or for patience to support them under it.—Here the *merry in heart* sing psalms of thanksgiving to God, the fountain of their cheerfulness and mirth.—Yea, according to the advice of St. *Paul*, *the word of God dwelleth plenteously* in the whole congregation; pious men and pious women not chusing to retire to rest, before they have recommended both soul and body to the divine protection, in the service of the temple.

Men that urge *business* in excuse for their non-attendance at such hours of the day as are usually taken up in business, must not be allowed this excuse at *an hour* when the business of the day is *over*, with great numbers at least of the working and trading part of them.

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III. I am now to mention, as was proposed in the *third* place, the *advantages* and *good effects* (besides those which have been already incidentally mentioned) *arising from an attendance on the daily Service*.—And surely very great ones are to be expected from it. The minds of men, of the common people in particular, might thereby, through use and habit, be brought to a *better sense* of Religion, and to more serious dispositions

dispositions and thoughts, than at present too many of them seem to have.

By *accustoming* themselves to call upon the *name of the Lord* in the congregation, they would, by degrees, be brought to abstain from that abominable custom, which prevails so much amongst the lowest sort of the people, of *profanely cursing and swearing* by that holy Name, almost with every breath. A wicked practice, which *frequenters of the daily Service*, amongst the *lowest* degrees of men, are seldom, if ever guilty of.—The very attendance upon it, if they attend with any degree of seriousness, must be a check upon them, and a guard against it.

Again, there are, I am afraid, too many instances of persons *casually* attending the public worship upon the Lord's day, but *constantly* neglecting it upon the week-days; who by their deportment too plainly discover, they give nothing more than a bare attendance, nothing more than a *bodily presence* at it. They literally *go to Church*; not as to a place of *public worship*, but merely as to a place of *public resort*; oftentimes, with sorrow I add, without so much as the appearance of worshippers.

Now one end of making this remark, is to introduce the following from it; that there are few, if any, to be met with, among persons *frequenting the public worship upon the week-days*, who are subject to this charge: by a daily attendance they have gained an
habit

habit of being, what frequenters of the public worship ought always to be, *serious* and *devout*, as much at one time as at another; always resorting to the house of God, considered and respected by them *as the house of prayer*.

And when men resort to it under this consideration and respect, they will of course be upon their guard against inattention and absence of thought; they will of course look upon themselves as *interested*, and as having a *share* in the public service: and not behave with the indifference of *unconcerned spectators*, or with the indecency of *profane libertines*.

Nay, I will venture one step farther, and undertake to answer for it, that we should soon perceive less lukewarmness, than we now do, in our congregations *upon the Lord's day*; in case the *daily Service* was more generally frequented than it is: since the *present frequenters of it*, few in number, are, almost all to a man, very serious and devout.

It was before observed, that a constant neglect of the public worship on the Lord's day, would doubtless be attended with a constant neglect of it on the week-days.—And not unlikely is it, for a constant neglect of it on the week-days, to introduce a proportionable neglect of it, even on the Lord's day; so natural is the transition from the breach of one duty to the breach of another;

ther; of a less to a greater, especially when they are both of the same kind.

Thus much at least may be affirmed upon the authority of *experience*—that, generally speaking, the most constant frequenters of the public worship on the week-days, are also the most constant frequenters of it, and of the *Holy Communion*, upon the Lord's day: they that can find leisure for the former, will very seldom, if ever, want either leisure or inclination for the latter.

Amongst the daily frequenters of the public worship, upon a principle of conscience, and out of a sense of duty, there are usually more persons of *common honesty* than are to be found in constant and wilful neglecters of it. These *latter*, in their intercourse with the world, too often discover that they act upon no principle, but allow themselves leave to make all advantages of the ignorance, credulity, and necessity of their neighbours.

Again; rare, if any, is the instance of a *whoremonger*, or of an *adulterer*, or of a *common drunkard*, to be seen in a frequenter of the daily Service: the devout attendance upon it, is a great *preservative* against these great and crying sins, in which men no sooner indulge themselves, but they are usually observed to withdraw from our religious assemblies. Indeed, there is good reason for us to expect from devout frequenters of the daily worship, that as they live more
godly,

godly, they will also live more *soberly* and more *righteously* than other men.

It has been before observed of frequenters of the daily Service, that, generally speaking, they demean themselves at Church with more *decency*, and with a greater sense of *piety*, than men accustomed to neglect the public Service, in case they at any time attend upon it.

If the lowest sort of the people in great towns and cities, were once accustomed to the religious practice of closing the day with *the Evening Service*, at an hour after their daily work was done; as they would have less *leisure*, so would they be less *likely* to waste the remaining part of it at *ale-houses*, or places of riot and expence: they would be more *inclined* to return from Church to their *own* houses: and, by the blessing of God, it might be a means of introducing *family devotion* there:—a service which, I am afraid, very few families make use of, that live in an entire neglect of the daily Service of the Church.

Another great advantage of such opportunities given to the lower ranks of the people of attending upon the public Service, after the business of the day is over, or before it begins, would in all probability be *this*; it would keep them *steady* in their conformity and attachments to the *established Church*. Men are naturally biased in favour of that to which they have long accustomed themselves;

themselves; and if the daily Service, by means of a due attendance upon it, once becomes familiar to them, they will not easily be drawn off from it into *schism* or *enthusiasm*.

Upon these considerations, as well the *prudence* as the *piety* of the Church is conspicuous, in appointing a *daily* Service. For in nothing are men more apt to run into *delusion*, than in matters of Religion. That is every man's concern, and every man is naturally addicted to it. Devotions of some sort or other, however wild or enthusiastic, the *common people* at least, always have had, and always will have.—Even in times of the grossest ignorance, there have been great, most probably the greatest *superstitions*.—And what is superstition, but Religion in *excess*, but Religion in a *phrensy*? It was highly expedient, therefore, that daily opportunities should be provided them of joining in a *sound* and *rational* worship, in a worship worthy of a reasonable creature.—And such, I will venture to say, is the *Church of England Service*; as better calculated than any public form of worship in any national Church throughout *Christendom*, to guard the mind against *enthusiasm* on the one hand, and *indivotion* on the other.

Blessed be God for the opportunities that are reached out in so many places of enjoying the celebration of the daily Service; especially the *evening*, at an hour when the laborious

laborious duties of the day may be presumed to be at an end.

And is it not greatly to be wished, that there were *more*, many more of these opportunities, than there yet are; and that they were to be had at churches situated at *convenient distances* one from another; that an attendance might be paid with less inconvenience to their respective inhabitants, and to persons of neighbouring parishes?—I am apt to think, that had this been the case, there had been much less likelihood or danger of seeing the inferior sort of our people seduced into *Tabernacles* and *Conventicles*.

The Act *for building Fifty new Churches* in and about the *Metropolis*, was a glorious Act, greatly to the honour of God, and greatly to the honour of the *times* in which it passed. And had the pious intention of it been completed, the opportunities of giving attendance upon the daily Service must, in all probability, have been greatly increased by it.

These are such considerations in favour of the daily public worship, and such arguments and proofs of the good effects arising and to be expected from it, as will, I trust, by the blessing of God, have their due influence in restoring a more general and constant attendance upon it.

I have now only to add,

IV.

IV. (the *fourth* thing proposed) *A reply* to such reasons, pleas and pretences, (besides the general one, of *business*) as may, notwithstanding all that has been said, weigh with some men to withhold their attendance from it.

And first, one reason may be, not because they are hindered from giving this attendance *by* business; but for fear it should be an hindrance *to* business: that is, for fear they should be looked upon by the men of the world, as persons having little or no business in it; since they have time enough upon their hands to spare *some*, though it be but a very *small* part of it, for the *daily Service*: and rather than incur this suspicion, they chuse to stay totally away from it; though the very time which they might employ in that service, it may be, they are so far from spending in the prosecution of any *business*, that they are throwing it away in perfect *idleness*.

Now it is plain from these mens' way of reasoning, and from the whole tenor of their excuse, that they had much rather pass in the world for men of great worldly business in it, than for men constant and regular at the daily Devotions.—Sure I am, there is great *worldly-mindedness* at the bottom of it. And yet surely, there is but very little weight in it, even as a *worldly* plea. For I should imagine, that this attendance, instead of implying a *want* of business, should, among
serious

serious and good men, be a means of increasing and promoting it; and, in the end, remove the construction the plea is calculated to avoid.

Regularity and *punctuality* in observing stated times of public devotion, would be likely to produce this conclusion in the minds of those who took notice of it; that men thus punctual and regular in *spiritual*, must be alike punctual and regular in their *secular* concerns: that as they made a conscience of thus paying their duty to God, they must be alike conscientious in the discharge of their duty to *men*.—And never yet was it made an argument, even by the most irreligious man alive, against employing his neighbour in any trust, or against dealing with him in the business of his profession or trade, that he had the character of a man of sincere piety.—Quite otherwise; it may be an *help*, but it never can be a necessary *hindrance* to him in his worldly affairs.

This is the first part of my answer to the conclusion of these men, by which they infer, that they must pass in the world for men of no worldly business, if they can find leisure to attend upon the daily Devotions.

By which answer, I would by no means be understood to say, that necessary worldly business is *at all times* and *at all adventures* to be postponed or neglected, rather than men of professions and trades should at *any* time, or upon any occasion, be wanting in
their

their attendance upon the public week-day Devotions. So far am I from saying this, that I have said rather the reverse of it; namely, that necessary worldly business, where an attendance at the daily public Devotions would unavoidably hinder the prosecution of it, is to *take place* of them.

Suppose a *physician* was to be sent for to a *patient*, just at the hour for daily prayers in his own parish; no man surely would say, that his attendance upon the *sick* ought to be deferred, till he had first attended upon those prayers.

Neither can it be supposed to have been the *intention* of the Church, in providing a daily worship, to expect that *every* member should, *every* day of his life, give his attendance upon it.

Nevertheless, this at least I apprehend must be understood to be her intent and meaning; that *none* of her members, who have leisure and opportunity of attending, should allow themselves *commonly* or *constantly*, much less *every day* of their lives, to neglect it.—That which was intended for *universal* use, must be made use of, by every individual man; by some more frequently than by others, according to the difference of their circumstances and situations in life: but yet is by none to be wholly and entirely neglected; just as if there was no such *Order* for daily public prayer at all.

Thus

Thus much might suffice by way of answer to the plea of such men, as industriously avoid giving attendance on the daily Service; not so much because it is an hindrance to business, as because it carries with it a suspicion of their *want* of business.

This, I am persuaded, oftentimes is the *secret*, though not the *avowed* reason, of the absence of men of professions and trades from the daily Service.

And because it is so, let me ask these men, Why (think they) do *hypocrites* attend the public worship, but because they find their worldly account in it? And if *bad* men find their worldly account in it, how much rather shall *good* and *pious* men, who attend upon a principle of sincere piety? The one make their worldly interest the *end* of their attendance; the other do not make *that* their end, but yet equally find their worldly account in attending. For whatever is the motive, the *effect*, as it regards any worldly advantage, must be much the same.

Upon the whole, were it once the general practice of Christians, ordinarily to frequent the daily Service; such a practice would effectually destroy this wretched plea: inasmuch as it is founded only on the present general *disuse* of the practice. And it would then as much affect a man's character, as a *man of business*, to be known to carry it on, to the entire neglect of the daily Devotions; as by this way of reasoning it is supposed to be

be affected by his daily attendance upon them.

All *trading people* know full well, how much *method* contributes to the dispatch of business; and how necessary it is, to have *different* stated times for *different* branches of it; that there may be no *interfering* of one part or branch with another: but that the succession of the whole may be regular, and without any material variation.

And, whilst they are thus adjusting the different parts of the day for the different branches of their worldly business, how easy is it for them at the same time to *select* a small portion of it for a daily attendance upon the public worship, the stated time for which is so well known beforehand!

For though no one general hour, either for morning or evening prayer, is fixed by our Church (as was the case with the Jewish worship) but the particular time is left to the discretion of the *Minister*; yet *that* time once fixed and well known, one would apprehend, it should be no very difficult matter, even for men in great business, so to adjust their business, as to be usually, if not always, at liberty to attend at the known and stated hour.

And after such a portion of time is set apart for the daily public Service, and they have accustomed themselves so to employ it, they will expect the *returns* of it with the same readiness as they expect the return
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of the several other parts of the day, that are destined by them for this or that worldly business, or for the common and necessary functions of life.

And by taking this method of disposing of the day, the business of one part of it will suffer no *encroachments* upon it by the business of another.—Nay, by this division of their time, by *habit* and *use* they will soon have made an attendance upon the public worship easy and familiar to them; insomuch that at length they will esteem *that* as much the business of the day, as they esteem any part of their worldly concerns to be the business of it.

There is, moreover, a peculiar merit in this *appropriation* of a stated time, and in thus observing a *periodical* return of daily public prayer; for it plainly shews to God and the world, that his servants do not *grudge* him a certain part of every day of their lives; that they do not look upon the worship of him to be a duty that may be done by *fits* and *starts*, or at an *idle* hour that hangs upon their hands, and when they may have nothing else to employ it in.—It would be paying no great regard to the *Object* of our worship, to spare him no other time for it, than such as we are at a loss how otherwise to spend.

They, who, in excuse for their absence, say they have not *leisure* to attend the daily Service, lay themselves open to the following

ing charge; that in their way of thinking and reasoning, *times of leisure*, or times in which they have *nothing else to do*, are the *only*, or at least the most *proper* times for the daily worship of God: nay further, this excuse seems to carry with it a sort of insinuation, that daily public devotion is the employment of the *indolent* and *idle only*; at least of men that have *nothing else to do*. Whereas, in truth, there is no reason why men of a regular application to worldly business, are not in every respect as proper to attend upon the daily Service, or why their attendance, *at proper intervals*, is not as reasonable as that of other men.

Having gained the *habits* of industry and attention by their application to *worldly business*, they will be more likely to *exert* these habits, whilst giving their attendance upon the *daily Devotions*. They will be more likely, than indolent and idle men, to apply themselves to them at stated times, with *seriousness* and *attention*, with *life* and *vigour*.—And where such an application as this is not given, it is no wonder that *no good effects* arise from an attendance upon them, or that *indevout* men perceiving none, forsake them.—No reason is there for us to expect that men *slothful* in business, should be *fervent* in prayer.—So that business, in this view of it, is rather a *preparation* for, than an *hindrance* to the daily public Devotions.—And if these men of business have

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not leifure to attend the daily Service; is it not their own *fault*, if they may find it, or if they may make it, by fixing beforehand a certain portion of every day for that purpose? And if they do not, surely, as I have said, there is little virtue in giving God that time, which they know not how otherwise to employ.

After all, I will with great readinefs admit, that the ffituation and circumftances of mens' worldly affairs may fometimes be *fuch*, as may render it highly inconvenient, if not impracticable, for them to obferve this ftated rotation and method of public devotion: and where it is fo, neither God nor men require it of us.

But furely a few exceptions, fupposed to be occafioned by *unavoidable neceffity*, will not deftroy the rule nor the refolution which it becomes us to make for ourfelves in this matter: thefe may yet be purfued in the *general* courfe of our conduct, though not without all interruption—and more than that is not here contended for.

In a word, all I afk of my fellow-chriftians concerning the point before us is this; that having once fixed a fmall portion of every day for the public worfhip of God, they would thenceforward efteem it as much *appropriated* to his Service, as they efteem the other parts of the day appropriated to their worldly bufinefs: and then it may be concluded, they will be punctual and exact,
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regular and methodical, in the discharge of both.

But perhaps it may be said, "That a *daily* public worship is a purely *human* appointment, and that there is no *divine command* for it; and wherefore should we be required to do more than God has required us to do? He hath required the public worship of him only *one* day in *seven*, the *Christian Sabbath*. A *daily* public worship therefore is a work of *supererogation*, a needless *burden* imposed upon the people of this nation."

1. Now to this I answer, first, That supposing what is here objected were *strictly* true, yet I see not how *conscientious* men could hold themselves at liberty to refuse compliance with the commands of their Governors both in Church and State, requiring this daily public worship from them. It is surely, to say the least of it, a *lawful* command: And does not our Religion require us to obey the lawful commands of authority both in Church and State?

2. I answer, secondly, That *daily* worship is certainly every Christian's *duty*.—There are scripture passages abundantly sufficient to prove this. If therefore an opportunity is to be had of paying this worship in the *public congregation*, every good and pious Christian will be glad to embrace it before *private* worship, if the hour for the one interferes with the hour for the other.

Where indeed such an opportunity is not to be met with, there daily *private* or *family* worship will, no doubt, be accepted of God in its room and stead.

And I am apt to believe, that this objection against the Service of the Church of England, because of its being a *daily Service*, will never be made to it by any good and pious persons, that daily accustom themselves to private and family prayer; to be sure not by those, who in their private and family devotions make use of such parts of the public Service as are fitted (as most of them admirably are) for family and private occasions; according to the title of a very useful collection out of it, stiled, *The Common-Prayer Book the best Companion in the House and Closet, as well as in the Temple.*

3. But I urge, thirdly, that with respect to daily prayer, the Church of England lays no greater *burthen* upon her members, than the precepts of the Gospel lay them under; which require daily devotion from every Christian: and in general have appointed the subject-matter of it; such as *prayers* and *praises*, &c.—All then that the Church does in the case, is to furnish them with a *common form* for this daily worship; and with opportunities, as to time and place, of *uniting* in it.—And where can daily devotion, required of every Christian, be so acceptably offered up, as in places set apart for the united exercise of it?

4. But fourthly, in answer to this objection, we say further, that the public worship prescribed by our Church, is not more frequent than in the Jewish or in the Christian Church: if not from the first foundation of it, yet so far back at least as to the third * century, through all succeeding ages down to the present times: so that this practice in the Church of England is built upon both Jewish and Christian *Antiquity*.

And is not a daily public Service as becoming us, as a daily public sacrifice became, and was required of, the Jews? In a word, a daily worship is certainly required of every Christian, and where there is convenient opportunity of making it a *joint* one, no good reason can be given why it should not be complied with.

5. But above all, fifthly and lastly, the objection is founded upon a great *mistake*, if they that make it imagine, that no other time was ever appointed by God for public worship but the *Sabbath Day*.—It is true, both the Jewish and Christian Sabbath were appointed for this purpose, and, which is particularly to be noted, for this purpose *only*: that is, both were to be dedicated to the worship and service of God; exclusive of all ordinary or common work, though inclusive of works of necessity and charity.

* Vide Bingham's Antiquities, Vol. I. p. 642. § 7. fol.

And yet besides this, there was a *daily Service*; however with this difference, that only a *part* of every day was to be employed in it, whilst the other parts remained for the discharge of worldly business.

Now for this daily morning and evening Service amongst the Jews, consisting of daily sacrifice and prayer, there is an express command of God, as may be learnt from *Exod.* xxix. 39. and from *Numb.* xxviii. 4.

In reference to which, are the *hours of prayer*, frequently mentioned in the *New Testament*.—Hours religiously observed by the Apostles themselves, and by the primitive Christians, besides their more solemn observance of the Lord's day.

Thus Peter and John are said to go up to the temple at the hour of prayer. And the converts to Christianity, made by the preaching of the same St. Peter (*Acts* ii. 46.) are said to have continued (together with the Apostles and Disciples) *daily and with one accord in the temple*; in order, no doubt, to partake of the service of it.

And here let me observe, that this is said, not only of these converts, (who yet are represented to be no less than *three thousand* in number) but of *all* that believed.—And in so great a number of believers, there must be many of such occupations, professions and trades, as required a daily attendance upon them; and yet this attendance was no hindrance to their attendance upon the service
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of the temple; nor did they industriously avoid giving it, for fear of being thought men of little or no worldly business.

In the parable of the *importunate widow*, *Luke 18* avenged by the unjust judge of her adversary, (a parable said to be spoken by our Lord for this end, to teach men that they ought *always* to pray) the good servants of God are represented *as crying day and night unto him*; where the words *day and night*, answer the word *always*; and import a daily attendance at *stated* hours for prayer—agreeable to what was observed before, concerning this and other similar scripture expressions; some of which being delivered in the form of a *command*, make, as was then remarked, this daily attendance every Christian's *duty*. *1-8.*

And thus, I conceive, the objection against the Service of the Church of England, on account of its being a *daily* Service, and, as alledged, of merely *human* appointment, has been more than sufficiently answered.

In the very words of her *Order* for this Service, she *supposes* that both *Minister* and *People* may be reasonably hindered from giving a daily attendance.—She has not told us, nor indeed, by reason of the variety of mens' *conditions* and *circumstances*, was it possible she should tell us, *all* the hindrances that are to be accounted *reasonable*; it is plain she admits the *being from home* as one: and, I suppose, she therefore admits it, be-

cause we are presumed to be from home upon *necessary* business; or so far from home, as to be out of the *reach* of attending.

This matter therefore must be left to the *piety* and *prudence* of every Christian to determine for himself: and yet, as some direction to him, it may not be unuseful to make a few observations more than have been already made, upon the *Order*, and upon the *limitations* of it.

1. And first, as the Order is for a *daily* attendance throughout the year, a *total neglect* must on all hands be allowed to be a flagrant breach of it; such, as nothing short of *necessity* can sufficiently excuse.

2. Secondly, It is not to be supposed, that either Church or State would have required a *daily* attendance, if it could be supposed that all or any of her members would be *always*, would be *often* reasonably hindered from giving it.

3. Thirdly, In virtue of this Order of the Church, confirmed by an Act of the State, for a daily public worship, *every day* throughout the year may be looked upon, in some degree, in her judgment, and by her appointment, *as holy*; though not in so strict and solemn a manner as the *Lord's-day*, and *Fast* and *Feast-days* are.

4. Fourthly, Were it to be supposed that reasonable causes of absence might be *frequent*, yet they must be so only at some times to *one* family or person, and at some times to *another*;

another; never so to *all at once*: and therefore were it usual for all that have leisure to attend, there never would be wanting such numbers as might well deserve the name of a Congregation.

5. Fifthly, Though it is not to be expected, that *every* person will give his attendance as constantly as he has opportunity and leisure to do it; yet thus much is always to be presumed, that in *populous* places, there always will be such an attendance at least given, as bears some *reasonable proportion* to their numbers.

And even this, I apprehend, will justly entitle the Service of the Church to be in fact what it was intended to be, a *daily* Service. And such an attendance cannot fail of being given, where men *in good earnest* intend it: for where they do, it is hardly possible there should be any thing like a total or a general non-attendance.

I leave these few observations upon the *Order* of the Church for a daily Service, to be seriously considered, and to be compared with my reader's own conduct and example in the matter; which, after all that has or can be said upon it, must be finally left to the conscience, and to the serious and cool reflections of every particular man to judge for himself.

Most surely daily public worship is a matter of serious concern, especially in these days of *national dangers and troubles*; which

call for the daily united applications of a *nation* to God for a deliverance from them.

The business of the day, if ushered in by united supplications and prayers, will, it may reasonably be expected, be carried on with *greater alacrity and cheerfulness*, and be crowned with *greater prosperity and success*: Again, the business of the day thus happily concluded, we shall return in the *evening* with hearts full of complacency and gratitude to the house of God, to commend ourselves and our families to his protection and mercy the ensuing night.

I trust experience has or will soon assure you that there is a wonderful *satisfaction* arising to the minds of feeble and dependent creatures, from reflecting upon this constant and regular discharge of our duty to our Creator, every morning and evening in the public congregation.

And as *frailties and infirmities* are the lot even of the best of men, I know no better means of guarding ourselves against them, than by this continual united application to the throne of grace, for the assistance of his Holy Spirit in our conflicts with them.

Indeed, unless men will lay it down as a *settled rule* to themselves, not to omit their attendance but upon some *real*, if not some *urgent* cause; such as sickness, or the like; they will be very apt to be absent upon the slightest occasions.—The least hindrance will be yielded to, till, in time, they never
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come at all. Interruptions, it is to be expected, will sometimes unavoidably happen: but the main point is, still to preserve an *habitual desire*, purpose, and will, to frequent the daily Service as often as it is reasonably in our power, and nothing intervenes but what may be postponed, in order to give us an opportunity of frequenting it.

But if, instead of this habitual desire and intention, to be constantly at the public devotions, we easily listen to every unnecessary *avocation* from them, we shall never want an excuse to be absent; nay, we shall soon gain a habit of absenting ourselves, without being at the pains of making any excuse for it; yea, without thinking ourselves at all obliged to make any.—I appeal to persons that in the former part of their lives have been generally present at these devotions; but yet have gradually given way to every little interruption, suffering it to prevail still more and more upon them, whether *this representation* be not in truth their very case? Did they not some years ago attend, it may be, pretty constantly? has not this constancy, by degrees, so far abated, till they are now as constantly absent, as they were once constantly present?

Whereas, if under an habitual sense of our duty to God, we have it always in our thoughts, and it is the settled resolution and intention of our wills, to embrace opportunities; we shall then guard against avocations,

tions, and industriously shun every temptation from indolence, from conversation, from visiting, or from other causes arising in our way to prevent our attendance:—we shall then keep ourselves *disengaged* from such amusements and diversions, as we foresee may be likely to break in upon the stated hour for public devotions; which, when it is known to be our constant practice to frequent, we need not be at the pains of an apology for withdrawing from company; either they will of their own accord leave us, or, which is rather to be wished, *influenced* by our example, will accompany us in our attendance upon them.

And as this attendance is to be constant and habitual throughout the year, so ought it more especially to be such *at awful and solemn seasons*; as upon *Saints* days and other *holy* days, upon *Wednesdays* and *Fridays*, and upon days preceding the celebration of the *blessed Sacrament*: upon all which, it becomes us to be more than ordinarily scrupulous, not to be wanting in it.

And, above all, it is our duty to give this attendance during the penitential season of *Lent*; as for other obvious reasons, so especially for this, that we may be eye and ear-witnesses of the public examination of *our children*; the children of the *rich*, as well as of the *poor*, in the principles of their Religion. The presence of the *parent* will give

give countenance to the *minister*, and add a solemnity and weight to his expositions, and be a further guard upon the children to behave with decency and seriousness, as well whilst under his examination, as whilst the daily Service is performing. One great cause of the neglect of which, no doubt, has been the great neglect of this *catechetical instruction* of the Christian youth, prescribed by our Church; for what good effect is *sooner* or more reasonably to be expected from it, than a due attendance upon her daily Service; to *worship God, to give him thanks, to call upon him, to honour his holy name and his word, and to serve him truly all the days of our lives?*

How much the said instruction contributes to a *rational* use of her Service, may be concluded from the behaviour of such persons at it, as have had the benefit of a Christian education *in our Charity-Schools*; whose behaviour is that of *reasonable* beings in the house of God. Which, by the way, is such an argument in favour of the *usefulness* of these Schools, as, with all good Christians, will weigh more for them, than any thing that has hitherto been objected, will weigh against them.

Whilst I have been arguing for daily public prayer, and for a preference of it to private, no one surely will conclude, that my meaning is, to depreciate *the secret devotions*

votions of the closet. So far from it, that in good earnest I recommend the constant and devout *use* of the one, as the best *preparative* for the like use of the other.

Indeed, men seem of their own accord aware of this, by making use of private prayer even *at Church*, previous to their use of the public devotions. But then, these private prayers are usually put up in so *heedless* and *slovenly* a manner, that they ill deserve the name of *devout ejaculations*.

After all that has been said upon the daily Service, it is not impossible but that the whole may meet with as little attention from too many of my readers, as that Service itself does; the one may be as little *regarded*, as the other is *frequented*. However, I shall have the satisfaction of having done what I conceived it became me to do.

In thus earnestly inviting you to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; or, in the words of the Royal Psalmist, with an *holy worship*: It will in all reason be expected of habitual frequenters of the daily Service, that they habitually practise every other duty of a man and a Christian: that they allow themselves in no immoralities; in no known or secret sin, much less in a custom or habit of sinning: for if they do, the principle which prompts them to give this attendance will never be admitted by God or man for a principle of piety, or to proceed from any sense of religion upon their minds.

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Hitherto I have entirely addrested myself to my brethren of the *Laity*.

But have we not one word of exhortation to *ourselves*, as *Ministers* of the Church, and concerning our *own* attendance upon her *daily Service*?

I answer; Yes, verily we have: and God grant it may ever more appear by our *example*, that we duly teach and instruct ourselves in this common duty of Christians, *before* we take upon us to require it of the people respectively committed to our charge.

The long complaint herein made of their great neglect of it, is but too justly founded upon the evidence of *fact*: and if we their *Pastors* ever expect to see the cause of this complaint, to any tolerable degree, removed, we must *continue* to set the pattern of a daily attendance of ourselves and families, particularly on *Wednesdays* and *Fridays*, and on *Fasts* and *Festivals*.

Should it be our misfortune to be destitute of an opportunity of doing this at our *own* Church, for want of a *congregation* there on ordinary days; may not that want be easily supplied to us from some *neighbouring* Church, where there are stated times of public worship?

We, the *parochial* Clergy, cannot but know that the Church, of which we have the honour to be *Ministers*, has in an especial manner made it *our duty* to celebrate, and consequently

frequently to join in the celebration of the week-day Service; with such a constancy as amounts, at least, to an *ordinary* and *habitual* frequenting it.—For should there be any amongst us, seldom or never appearing at the daily morning and evening Service, but when they are to *officiate* as Ministers to the congregation; it would give an handle to the people to make reflections, which they would be very apt to lay hold of, to our disadvantage, and as an excuse for their *own* non-attendance upon it.

But where our non-attendance is general and habitual, and without just cause for it, our people will no more excuse us, than we can ourselves; though some of them may be ready to justify their *own* neglect, by that, which yet is no real justification of them, *our* neglect of it.

Upon the whole: Since our Church has provided her Members with such frequent, even with *daily* opportunities of joining in the public worship of God, and with an excellent form of prayer, adapted to all the occasions of humble petitioners for blessings spiritual and temporal; under a grateful sense of this national blessing, let us learn to pay all due honour and reverence to *our holy Mother*, for this instance and proof of her pious and affectionate concern for our eternal welfare.

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And let us take care to express this honour and reverence, by daring to defend her against the efforts of all her adversaries, of whatever denomination or persuasion.— Let us pray daily, both in public and private, for the *peace of our Jerusalem*, and for the *prosperity* of all that *love* her. Above all, let us take care to express this honour and reverence for her, by a strict attention to her *Rubrics*, to that Rule and Order especially, which requires a *daily* attendance upon the public worship.

Thus habituated to her devotions in her *militant* state, we shall be fitted and prepared to join with her in her *triumphant* state; when our daily prayers shall be turned into never-failing praises; when that which is now imposed upon us, as our *duty*, shall be nothing less than a perpetual delight to us.

And indeed, when one considers to what a degree of *spiritual* pleasure, a devout soul here upon earth, even whilst *cloathed with flesh*, is capable of being raised, by the celebration of *public* (especially of *cathedral*) worship; it is quite beyond our present reach to conceive the *joy* which an unembodied spirit, or rather, which a soul in a *spiritualized* body, must have, when uniting with the choir of heaven in the adoration of God.—When, *with Angels and Archangels, and with all the Company of Heaven, we shall laud and magnify his holy Name*; shall join
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in one general assembly of the Saints, in communion and fellowship one with another, to all eternity.

To which holy Catholic Church, God of his infinite mercy bring us all, both priests and people, for the sake of the meritorious intercession of our High Priest and Saviour Jesus Christ our Lord.

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